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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 002040

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [CY](#)
SUBJECT: LOCAL ELECTIONS A DRAW

REF: A. NICOSIA 2016
[1](#)B. NICOSIA 1964

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Schlicher, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The governing coalition and opposition alike claimed victory in the December 17 municipal elections. The alliance)- comprising AKEL, DIKO, and EDEK)- won mayorships in five major Cyprus cities, while opponent DISY triumphed in smaller municipalities and increased its take of city council seats. Sunday's biggest winner was undoubtedly AKEL's Eleni Mavrou, who prevailed in Nicosia despite pre-election polling placing her third in the race. Although municipal elections results historically have not proven a foolproof predictor for subsequent presidential races, it is difficult to see Tassos Papadopoulos's re-election chances hurt by the December 17 draw. END SUMMARY.

Breaking Down the Results

[1](#)2. (U) In terms of total mayorships won, 18 of 33, the coalition actually saw a drop from 2001, when the then-new AKEL-DIKO-EDEK alliance won 22. In the December 17 race, however, it delivered the biggies: capital Nicosia, second city Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos, and the exile municipality of Kyrenia. AKEL-affiliated coalition candidates triumphed in seven of the 12 races they contested, while DIKO members batted 1.000, winning the seven races they ran. EDEK would seem the coalition stepchild, since its standard-bearers won only two of six races. It, too, is claiming victory, however, arguing that the party's vote haul did not dip from May 2006, when Cyprus last held parliamentary elections.

[1](#)3. (U) Right-wing opposition DISY elected 11 mayors, a huge jump from five in 2001. Most notably, DISY inked wins in exile municipality Famagusta and in Yermasoyia, both traditionally AKEL strongholds. Independent candidates won the remaining Cypriot municipalities.

[1](#)4. (U) As of December 18, voting officials had not published official results for municipal and town council races, in which parties must submit individual candidate lists (no coalitions allowed.) Preliminary tabulations, however, show that DISY polled five percent more than it had in the May parliamentary elections, winning it the title of Cyprus's most-voted party. Exit polls attributed the gains to success in pulling EUROKO voters)- who had abandoned DISY before the May race)- back to the flock. As to coalition results at the council level, the parties' combined take remained steady, but, individually, AKEL lost and DIKO won small numbers.

AKEL wins the battle of Nicosia

15. (SBU) With her surprise victory, AKEL MP and one-time ardent Annan Plan backer Eleni Mavrou becomes the first woman and first AKEL mayor of Nicosia. Recent polling had shown her in third place (Ref A), barely able to muster fifty percent of AKEL voters to her candidacy. Analysts attributed Mavrou's last-minute rise to AKEL enforcing party discipline and deploying its ranks on a door-to-door campaign. President Papadopoulos's recent lobbying likely helped somewhat, although exit polls showed that only 30 percent of his DIKO party voters cast Mavrou votes.

16. (SBU) Visibly relieved with the results, AKEL General Secretary Demetris Christofias hailed her win as proof that

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"everything is possible" for AKEL. In her first statement, Mavrou pledged to become "a nuisance to the central government" by claiming, together with all other mayors, more political and economic power for local governments.

... and Limassol, but loses Famagusta

17. (SBU) The success of AKEL in Limassol looks more a victory for former Interior Minister Andreas Christou than an endorsement for the party. Local-boy-made-good Christou was fighting for his political survival, in June having resigned from Papadopoulos's cabinet. Like Mavrou, Christou's pro-Annan stance had left him unpopular with coalition-mates DIKO and EDEK. Moreover, his opponent, DISY-backed Eleni Theocharous, enjoyed support not only from her own party but from the sectors of the coalition, based on her staunch opposition to the Annan Plan. Nonetheless, Christou scored a decisive victory with 55 percent of votes cast.

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18. (SBU) The election of DISY-sponsored Alexis Galanos as mayor of Famagusta marked the first time a non-AKEL candidate had won this race. A former president of the Cypriot Parliament and a founding member of DIKO, the 66-year-old Galanos had retired from politics several years ago due to a turbulent relationship with the leadership of his party. Sophisticated and well-connected, Galanos offered a more appealing choice to Famagusta refugees, who hoped to find in him a more effective representative for their city in international fora.

Comment

19. (C) The success of the government coalition parties in this election bodes well for their continued cooperation up to the February 2008 presidential election. Opponents had predicted a crisis in government, had AKEL's pro-Annan, high-profile candidates lost Nicosia and Limassol. Their performance, however, would seem to dash all hopes for such an outcome. Further, DISY's increase in electoral strength has little net value, since its continuing "isolation" dampens any realistic hope to win in 2008. Its future presidential fortunes now lie in peeling EDEK from the three-party alliance, a dim prospect at best, or in hoping that internal tensions will divide DIKO into pro-Papadopoulos and pro-Kyprianou camps.

110. (C) New Nicosia Mayor Mavrou's natural disposition is toward cooperation with the north Nicosia municipality as a means of moving closer to overall reunification of the island. We will certainly encourage these instincts, as we are doing with the new mayor in the north. That said, Mavrou will have to contend with a party leadership whose overall interest in maintaining the national coalition will certainly outweigh its interest in cooperation across the Green Line. Schlicher